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DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/ARP, ISN A/S MCNERNEY
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SUBJECT: SAUDI AMBASSADOR ON KING'S THINKING REGARDING
PRESIDENTIAL VISIT

REF: RIYADH 606

Classified By: CDA Michael Gfoeller Reasons 1.4 (b,d)

11. (S) Summary: In an April 17 meeting with the Charge' d'Affaires, Saudi Ambassador to the United States and Royal Advisor Adel al-Jubeir reaffirmed King Abdullah's strong interest in announcing or concluding agreements on visa reciprocity, Critical Infrastructure Protection (CIP), and nuclear cooperation during the President's upcoming visit to Riyadh (reftel). Al-Jubeir added that the King wishes to announce an agreement on reciprocally extending visa validity that includes student visas. He stated that the King also wishes to conclude the memorandum on nuclear cooperation and announce Saudi Arabia's accession to the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) and the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism (GI) during the Presidential visit. He referred to the visit as a "summit" and noted repeatedly that it should be used to celebrate the 75th anniversary of US-Saudi diplomatic relations. Finally, al-Jubeir said that the King had been impressed by his meeting with Ambassador Crocker and General Petraeus on April 16. He suggested that King Abdullah might announce changes in Saudi Arabia's policy on Iraq before the President's arrival in Riyadh, which could involve the provision of Saudi economic and humanitarian assistance to Iraq. End Summary.

12. (S) The King's Thinking: The Charge' met for four hours with Ambassador al-Jubeir at the latter's invitation April 17 to discuss the President's upcoming visit to Riyadh. Al-Jubeir noted that he had discussed with King Abdullah his April 12 meeting with the Ambassador (reftel). The Charge' noted that the King had stated during this meeting that he wishes to announce or conclude during the President's May visit agreements on visa validity, Critical Infrastructure Protection (CIP), and civilian nuclear cooperation. Al-Jubeir affirmed that this is the King's intention.

13. (S) Visas: On visas, al-Jubeir stressed that King Abdullah wants to announce an overall agreement on the extension of visa validity that will cover all three categories under discussion: tourists, business travelers, and students. He laid particular emphasis on student visas, noting that, "The King cares more about this issue than about business or tourist visas." He noted that an agreement without student visas would not be worth doing, from the Saudi point of view. He also reaffirmed the King's readiness to work closely with the Department of Homeland Security to prevent and counter the radicalization of Saudi students in the US, including by re-interviewing students on a selected or random basis when they return to the Kingdom on vacation. Al-Jubeir added, "The King was very happy with his meeting with Secretary Chertoff and wants to stick to the understandings they reached in their conversation."

14. (S) Critical Infrastructure Protection: Al-Jubeir noted

that the Saudi monarch is equally committed to signing an agreement on Critical Infrastructure Protection during the President's May visit. After discussing the contents of the draft CIP Technical Cooperation Agreement with the Charge', he had no changes to the text to suggest. Al-Jubeir noted that the serious threat of terrorist or Iranian attack on the Kingdom's oil and gas infrastructure, as well as its desalination plants, which provide 90 percent of the capital's drinking water, explains the King's sense of urgency in this matter. The regional security situation is not conducive to delay, he said.

15. (S) Nuclear Cooperation: The CDA reviewed the contents of the draft memorandum on nuclear cooperation with Ambassador al-Jubeir. Al-Jubeir stated that the King wishes to sign the memorandum during the President's visit. He also said that the King wishes to accede to both the PSI and the GI at the same time. He had no suggestions regarding any possible changes to the text of the memorandum.

16. (S) Washington Meetings: Al-Jubeir added that he will return to Washington on or about Monday, April 21. He then plans to seek meetings with the President, the Vice President, the Secretary, DHS Secretary Chertoff, and other senior USG officials to discuss the King's intentions regarding the agenda for the President's visit. He added that he would also like to discuss modalities, including the questions of who should sign the memorandum on nuclear cooperation and the CIP technical cooperation agreement on behalf of the two governments, as well as the exact mechanism for Saudi accession to the PSI and GI.

17. (S) Iraq: Ambassador al-Jubeir commented that King Abdullah had been very impressed with Ambassador Crocker's and General Petraeus's remarks during their recent meeting with him. He stated that the King would wait to see the outcome of Iraq's provincial elections this Autumn before making a decision on sending a Saudi Ambassador to Baghdad. He added that economic and humanitarian assistance and debt relief would be easier issues for the King to address right now. He suggested that the King might make changes in Saudi policy toward Iraq before the President's visit in response to the message relayed by Ambassador Crocker and General Petraeus.

18. (S) Comment: Although he did not attend the April 12 meeting between King Abdullah and the Ambassador, al-Jubeir was clearly very familiar with its contents. His views tracked very closely with those of the King, as is always the case. His remarks indicate that King Abdullah has made a decision to conclude the agreements on visas, Critical Infrastructure Protection, and nuclear cooperation for reasons of a strategic political nature rather than from any tactical considerations. End Comment.
GFOELLER

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End Cable Text